

Engaging Evil Spirits through Spiritual Courts



The suggestion by Akanayo Konkronko, director of Black Herbal Clinic, a traditional medicine clinic that among other activities battle evil spirits, for the establishment of National Spiritual Courts to try traditional spiritual cases may sound weird to some, especially those who may think of it as irrational in an age of advances in science and reasoning, but, however, it reflects authentic Ghana and some of its inhibiting cultural challenges.

That certain deplorable behaviours are attributed to evil forces is a fact within the Ghanaian/African culture. Despite 51 years of nationhood even some educated folks believe that certain awful behaviours are caused by evil forces. Konkronko thinks since certain disruptive behaviours defy modern rationality and are, therefore, influenced by evil

forces, spiritual courts are established to deal with such cases. In Konkronko, the modern courts of law are not equipped to deal with spiritual cases, hence his suggestion of spiritual courts.

The rationalist will say Konkronko is irrational and backward, and that he is trying to take Ghana back to the primitive era where peoples' troubles were blamed more on demons than on human agency. But Konkronko doesn't think so and is convinced that the disturbing increases in crimes are inversely proportional to growth of activities of evil forces Ghana-wide. How do you resolve such Konkronko thinking that crimes are caused by human agency and not by malevolence forces? What are the differences between spiritual and human cases? What are the mechanisms for dealing with spiritual cases? Who determines what a spiritual case is? How does the physical deals with the metaphysical? A cosmological impasse!!! A developmental challenge!!!

I know woman some of whose children have been involved in crimes and she attributes the children's behaviours to evil spirits. She said the various shrines, juju-marabouts and spiritualists she visited across Ghana told her that. While her interpretation from traditional Ghanaian spiritual beliefs is accepted by some, others dismiss her claims and argue that it is due to indiscipline. Circling in most Ghanaians minds is this woman's dilemma. Is the woman rational or irrational in the context of the Ghanaian culture? What would modern science say about her despair? A complication, a national complication!!!

If we put the woman's dilemma to Konkronko, how would he resolve it? Would konkronko attempt to resolve the woman's dilemma from his traditional beliefs or from modern science, too, so as to come to a balanced conclusion? Is Konkronko balanced or because of the culture he is biased against modern science? For, Konkronko argues, reports the Accra-based The Sun that the Spiritual Courts would also help reduce the operations of witches and wizards who have brought hardships and atrocities upon countless innocent people in society. How would the Spiritual Courts reduce the diabolical activities of evil spirits that cause crimes? Who would be the judge? How would the judge be trusted? How fair would the spiritual judge be? Are there traditional spiritual laws to arbitrate spiritual cases? Would the spiritual judge use empirical evidence to inform decisions?

Back to the future? Konkronko claims in pre-colonial Ghana traditional rulers used to sit on spiritual cases and this helped reduce witchery and wickedness in society. And there have been astronomical increases in spiritual cases today because traditional rulers have discarded spiritual cases; perhaps such spiritual cases are seen today by modern courts of law as caused by human agents and not any demons. Or perhaps there are increases in evil forces over the last 51 years that are sending Ghanaians to commit crimes and behave badly.

Konkronko's mind reflects the schism between traditional values and the neo-liberal, colonial ones that created Ghana. In Konkronko there are two Ghana's the traditional and the colonially created, the two waiting to be reconciled by the sleeping Ghanaian elites.

Created by the colonialists in their neo-liberal development paradigms, Ghanaian cultural values have not had prominent place in Ghana's development process unlike places like Asia and Latin America. More seriously, Ghanaian traditional spiritualism, with all its nuances, like the rest of Africa, have been battered over the centuries, with names like pagan, childish, primitive, and backward spinning around.

Either due to intellectual servitude or crass idiocy Ghanaians/Africans bought into such negative demeaning of their very innate spirituality, and the rest is what you see on the ground, a people spiritually confused and who have self-destruct their own traditional spirituality to the extent that their development process is dominated by foreign development paradigms. While Asian traditional spiritual practices such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Yoga, among other Vedic practices, have been part of their progress, African traditional spiritualism have not taken prominent place in Africa's progress.

The import here is that, like the rest of Africa, Ghanaian traditional spiritualism was suppressed by the colonialists (who imposed their religions and other spiritual belief systems), seeing the stifling of the growth of traditional spiritualism as vehicle for progress. The contention isn't to downplay other worldly religions for traditional Ghanaian/African religions but match them with Africa's on equal basis, respect and dignity. Afrikana Religion where are you? After all, Christianity and Islam, over the decades, have become part of Africa's spiritual heritage in a global fast-flowing syncretism.

It is in this context that Ghanaian/African spirituality, for long humiliated, hidden and timid, is coming into the forefront of progress. Nowhere are attempts to reclaim Ghanaian/African spiritual self-confidence, disentangle it from its long-running inferiority complex, and project it for progress a la the legendary chief traditional priest Okomfo Anokye than in Nana Kwaku Bonsam, a prominent Ghanaian traditional priest, who has been practicing African religion openly with pride and dignity, encouraged by the mass media and influential personalities such as the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu 11.

As part of gradual resurgence traditional spirituality, Nana Bonsam has revealed how a lot of Spiritual Church priests have been consulting him for spiritual assistance not only in prayers and counseling but also rituals. As Bonsam reflects, while Ghanaian spirituality is steadily rediscovering itself, simultaneously its fringe, dark aspects are receiving intellectual attention. The challenge is how to refine the negative, dark and fringe aspects of the culture so as to free Ghanaians from its inhibitions and further drive Ghana's development process.

It is in such budding openness by Konkronko and Nana Bonsam that Ghanaian/African spirituality, as a development motor, certain inhibiting aspects would be modernized and subjected to adjectives like logic and realistic and verbs such as investigate, analyze, and explore. It is through such venture that the two Ghana's the traditional and the colonially created would harmonize and help bring balance to a Konkronko thinking and enhance a Nana Bonsam traditional religious practices.

But all these will demand studies within Ghanaian traditional values, where Ghanaian roots are

deepest, in order to resolve any Konkronko thinking in the context of empiricism and science.

By Kofi Akosah-Sarpong

Source: Kofi Akosah-Sarpong

Story from Modern Ghana News:

<http://www.modernghana.com/news/180893/1/engaging-evil-spirits-through-spiritual-courts.html>

Published: Sunday, August 31, 2008

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